

C O N N E C T I C U T   G E N E R A L   A S S E M B L Y  
P L A N N I N G   A N D   D E V E L O P M E N T   C O M M I T T E E

H.B. 6153 AN ACT AUTHORIZING LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANIES TO VOTE IN  
ELECTIONS IN THE THOMPSONVILLE FIRE DISTRICT  
TESTIMONY OF JAMES BAILEY BRISLIN

Senator Cassano, Representative Rojas, Senator Fasano, Representative Aman, distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, good morning.

My name is James Bailey Brislin. I am a citizen of Enfield, Connecticut and have a personal interest in the revitalization of the Thompsonville village. I come before you this morning asking you to reject H.B. 6153, "An Act Authorizing Limited Liability Companies to Vote in Elections in Thompsonville Fire District".

In the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the landmark *Citizens United*<sup>1</sup> case, much ink has been spilled on the topic of corporate citizenship and corporate participation in the democratic process. Given the left's vehement rejection of the doctrine handed down in this ruling, I could have never fathomed that one day a Democratic state representative would introduce legislation extending voting rights to corporations.

This bill is a bald-faced attack on the sovereignty of the voters of Thompsonville Fire District. In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its ruling in *Reynolds v. Sims*<sup>2</sup>. As a result of that case, which enunciated the doctrine of "one person, one vote" Connecticut was forced to hold a Constitutional Convention restricting its legislature.

An extension of voting rights to corporations would dilute the power of Thompsonville voters. Indeed, if Target, Home Depot, Best Buy, Kohl's or any of their subsidiaries were organized as LLC's they would arguably be able to vote in fire district elections. If the legislature extends the franchise to corporations organized as LLCs, it must extend it uniformly to all corporations organized according to that form. I firmly believe that entry of multi-national corporations into municipal elections is dangerous to our republican form of government and should not be allowed.

Currently C.G.S. §7-6 limits voting in fire district elections to "any person who is an elector of such town may vote and any citizen of the United States of the age of eighteen years or more who, jointly or severally, is liable to the town, district or subdivision for taxes assessed against him on an assessment of not less than one thousand dollars". This enabling legislation limits voting to natural persons. A special act may further restrict eligibility to vote, but cannot exceed the grant of authority in §7-6. If this bill were to be enacted as written, it would exceed §7-6's grant of authority and most likely be overturned on judicial review.

As you consider this legislation, I ask you to consider the words of Chief Justice Earl Warren, "Legislators represent people, not trees or acres. Legislators are elected by voters, not farms or cities or economic interests." I ask you today to affirm the principle of "one person, one vote" and reject the bald-faced corporate power-grab contained in H.B. 6153.

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<sup>1</sup> *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 310 (2010)

<sup>2</sup> *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964)